

The History of Sweet Springs Monroe County, West Virginia

By Barbara Ruth Kidd

I

Discovery And Early Owners

The healing miracle of the Sweet Springs was a legend before William Lewis, the first Springs owner, was ever born. The first stories tell of an Indian who was wounded by some early white traders and left in the swampy waters to die. The next morning he felt so rejuvenated he hastened to join his companions, already some distance from the Springs. Imagine their surprise when their "dead" comrade rushed in among them. Another story similar to that tells of an early white settler who hid from pursuing Indians by submersing himself in the waters up to his waist. Like most pioneers he suffered from acute rheumatism, and the next morning he was surprised to feel relief from his ailment. So, the story goes, he began to bathe in the swamp waters and was cured¹. This same story with only the variation that he discovered himself cured after the first night is told of William Lewis.²

The importance of the frontier springs, of which Sweet Springs was one, was evident to the Tidewater residents of Virginia at an early date. On June 27, 1751, the *Virginia Gazette* at Williamsburg carried the following interesting item:

The Honourable Lewis Burwell Esq., President of this colony is returned from the Medicinal Springs on the Frontiers, where he has been some Time past for the Recovery of his Health, and we hear he has received much Benefit by the Waters, —He is now at his Seat in Gloucester County.

The same newspaper in 1768 advertised "a Scheme of a lottery for raising the sum of nine hundred pounds, to make a road over the mountains to the warm and hot springs in Augusta County." It listed the prizes as follows:

¹Works Progress Administration, *The Springs of Monroe County*.
²Frances Logan, *The Old Sweet*, p. 12.

1 prize	1000 pounds
2 prizes of	500 pounds

4 prizes of	250 pounds
5 prizes of	100 pounds
50 prizes of	50 pounds
Total	6000 pounds
62 prizes	4438 blanks
6000 tickets at 20 shillings	6000 pounds
15% to be deducted from prize.	

James Moss, the first known settler at the Sweet Springs area, was probably a squatter. At any rate, he disposed of his rights to the land to William Lewis, brother of General Andrew Lewis, about 1774. William Lewis was given a land grant by King George III for the Sweet Springs area, which was probably part of the 8,000 acres which was his share of the estate of Colonel John Lewis, his father³. For some unknown reason he did not seem to be able to make the grant permanent until 1774. He moved his family there in 1784. After that he was known as "William Lewis of Sweet Springs" because there was always more than one William Lewis.

It is not known exactly when the Springs first began to operate as a resort. The first record of a visitor to Sweet Springs bears the date 1790 and is not a flattering one. Archibald Alexander, a prominent theologian at the time, wrote with disgust:

... A Company of gamblers never intermitted their games day or night, Sunday or workingday ... sometimes come out to the fountain, adding not a little to the horrid symphone of oaths. They strove to out do one another in the rapidity of their profane expressions! ...⁴

Until about 1792, there was probably nothing on the grounds to resemble a resort except a few scattered log cabins. About that year a log hotel, the first, was erected. It was a long rambling structure with a porch extending along its full length.⁵ However, in 1791 a Virginian writing from the resort to a friend in England described the resort:

... Our lodgings was in Logg [sic] Cabins and mattresses and some beds to lay on. I suppose you do not know what kind of a house is meant by logg cabbin [sic], therefore I must describe it to you. They are generally about 20 feet long and about 16 feet wide, with ... round logs piled upon each other

³Lyman Chalkley, *Chronicles of the Scotch-Irish Settlements in Virginia*, Vol. I, p. 213.

⁴James W. Alexander, *The Life of Archibald Alexander, D.D., LL.D.*, p. 78.

⁵Logan, *op. cit.*, sketch, p. 3.

like . . . a pan, and after they get them about seven feet high they keep laying them up and drawing them in, which forms a roof after this they cover it with slabs or boards of about four feet without the help of a nail.

Then they lay a plank floor and then they sop the body of the house between the loggs [sic] with mud to keep the air out. After this gets dry they generally whitewash the whole house inside and out, in each of these Cabbins [sic] there's generally about three people lodges and thus we are accommodated at the Sweet Springs.⁶

According to Mr. Butler, there were two reasons for the poor accommodations at the Sweet. One was the fact that until about 1790 the mountain roads were too dangerous to travel because of Indians; the other was that the land and springs belonged to one person. This latter reason gives rise to the speculation that perhaps William Lewis did not care whether he operated a resort and so was little inclined to make any improvements on the facilities at the Springs. However, a ray of hope for the future is expressed:

I expect it will be better in a few years as there's a petition drawn up to be handed to our next General Assembly praying for a Town to be laid off. If that should take effect we shall have many Inns which will make it much more Comfortable to Visitors.⁷

The town he spoke of was planned by William Lewis to be called Fontville. It was to have covered thirty acres of Lewis's land, divided into half-acre lots, and sold at public auction for the best price.⁸ Unfortunately, Fontville never became more than a "paper town." Although the exact location of the Fontville acreage is not known, it is likely that some of the houses of the village of Sweet Springs are located on the Fontville lots.

Whatever the inconveniences, guests continued to visit the resort, and one man criticized the use of the unfinished courthouse (district court was held at Sweet Springs for a few years) as a dining room and the log cabins which leaked during hard rains, but thoughtfully added that

. . . each of us have a small cot bedstead, a mattrese [sic], sheets, blankets, etc. I have slept very comfortable on it and

⁶Laurence Butler, letter to Mrs. Anna Chadoik, Cumley House, near Harbarough, April 25, 1791.

⁷Ibid.

⁸Oren F. Morton, *A History of Monroe County, West Virginia*, p. 202.

⁹Samuel Coale, *Journal*, June 21, 1793.

find one blanket very necessary. Our table is well supplied with provisions that suit both invalids and healthy persons. . . .⁹

William Lewis, the owner and originator of the resort idea, was the son of John Lewis, Irish immigrant and early prominent settler of Augusta County. As early as 1754 Andrew and William Lewis were exploring the banks of Dunlap Creek near Sweet Springs.¹⁰ The Sweet Springs site was chosen for the home spot by 1760, but the Lewises did not move there until 1784, or thereabouts. William Lewis lived there from then until his death in 1811. He was said to be as brave as any of his brothers, but less disposed to seek fame by killing.¹¹ He was considered handsome, muscular, and very pious.

The first Lewis home at Sweet Springs was a large log cabin located near a mill at the Red Sweet (now Sweet Chalybeate), about one mile from the location of the present buildings at Sweet Springs.¹² Later he built a stone house which stood at the rear of the site on which the brick mansion, Lynnside, stood.¹³

One rumor has it that Sweet Springs was bought by men from South Carolina, about 1796, who planned to erect several commodious dwellings in the neighborhood. Whether these dwellings were to have been on the Springs property proper can only be guesswork, for apparently the deal did not materialize.¹⁴ The Sweet Springs land remained in the Lewis family hands for many years to come.

William Lewis apparently had turned over the Sweet Springs property to his son John before 1805, because in that year John Lewis leased the Sweet Springs property for a period of eight years to Robert and George Turner. They were to pay an annual rent of \$2,000. This lease became effective January 1, 1807. The Turners agreed to keep the courthouse and jail in good repair and not to permit timber to be cut nor to allow any tenants on the land.¹⁵ In leasing the property, Lewis agreed

⁹Morton, *op. cit.*, p. 25.

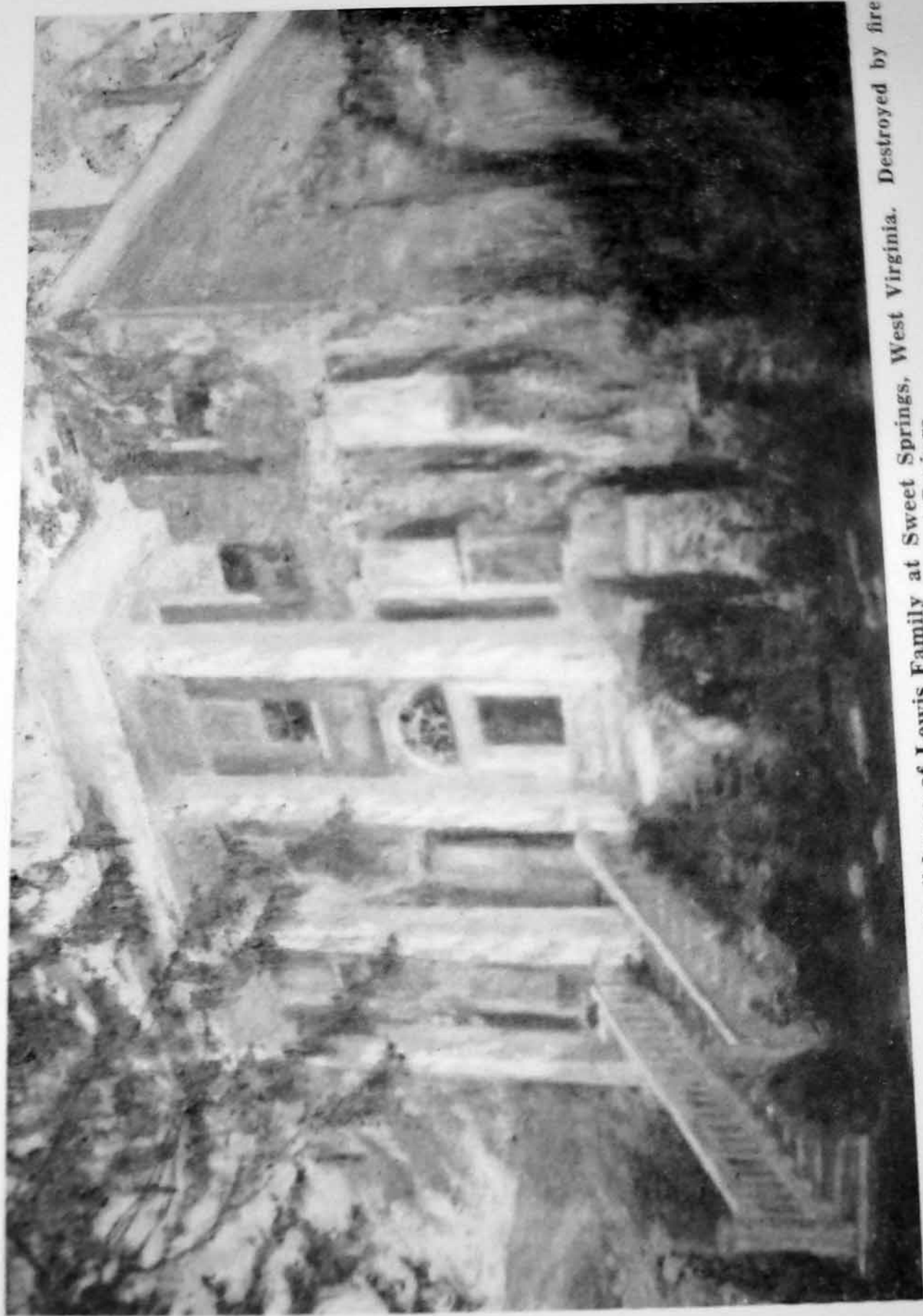
¹⁰James A. Waddell, *Annals of Augusta County, 1726-1871*, p. 126. The other brothers were Thomas, Andrew, and Charles Lewis. Andrew is noted for his exploits as an Indian fighter and for his participation in the Battle of Point Pleasant. Charles was killed at Point Pleasant. Thomas was the first surveyor of Augusta County, Virginia.

¹¹Morton, *op. cit.*, p. 370.

¹²Lynnside was burned in 1932 or 1933. At present only a shell remains of that once magnificent mansion.

¹³Isaac Weld, *Travels in Virginia in Revolutionary Times*, no page.

¹⁴Sweet Springs District Court Record Book, pp. 172-173.



Copy of painting of "Lynnside," home of Lewis Family at Sweet Springs, West Virginia. Destroyed by fire in early 1930's. Painting owned by Miss Coralie Lewis, Sweet Springs.

not to put a tavern on what was known as the Mill Place, since it would be detrimental to the Sweet Springs property, under the management of the Turners. The location of the Mill Place is not known; however, since a number of mills probably operated along Dunlap Creek at various times, it could have been at almost any place on the creek. William Lewis had divided 436 acres of the farm between the Sweet and Red Springs between his sons John and Charles Lewis on October 25, 1804. It is quite likely that the Mill Place was part of this farm.¹⁶

James Moss, the squatter on the Lewis property in earlier days, was still a landowner in the Sweet Springs area in 1807. On April 7 of that year, Moss gave a deed of trust to John Lewis for a debt of \$230.64. Charles Lewis was made trustee and was to sell the land at public auction if the debt was not paid within one year.

No change in ownership of the property was made until John B. Lewis, grandson of the first William, gave a deed of trust to the property to one Laurens through his trustee William E. Haskell for a debt of \$10,000.¹⁷ It was to be paid off in ten years, but there is no evidence that Lewis failed to meet the obligation.

John B. Lewis's brother, William L. Lewis, in 1842, apparently took over a portion of the debt and received a deed of trust for 1,000 acres of the Sweet Springs property as security for \$9,000.¹⁸

In this same year John B. Lewis found himself embroiled in a large debt which gave to various men deeds of trust for much of his property, including that at Sweet Springs. The reasons for this debt are vague. Three years previous he had built a new and grand hotel, and it could be that he was unable to finance the venture. Also local tradition and family legends hint that he might have lost it at the "gaming table." The debt incurred by Lewis amounted to the magnificent sum of \$34,555, excluding a debt owed by both John B. Lewis and

¹⁶*Ibid.*, pp. 150-152.

¹⁷Monroe County Deed Book, Vol. L, p. 348 (February 9, 1837).

¹⁸*Ibid.*, Vol. N, pp. 211-212 (February 24, 1842).

James L. Woodville of \$4,526.25.¹⁹ The following is a list of Lewis's creditors:

Thomas P. Lewis	\$16,000.00 ²⁰
Bank of Virginia	8,500.00 ²¹
Wm. B. Phillips	5,535.00 ²²
James L. Woodville	4,520.00 ²³
	<hr/>
	\$34,555.00

[There also was another debt for which the sum is not given.]

In the case of all these debts the same security was put up: Sweet Springs and all the rest of Lewis's vast holdings in Monroe and Alleghany Counties. Also if the debt were not paid within a specified time, all of the lands were to be advertised and sold at public auction. They were to be advertised in the *National Intelligencer*, Washington; *Richmond Whig*, Richmond; *Enquirer*, New York; *Courier*, New York; *Enquirer*, Western Whig of Lewisburg, *Fincastle Democrat*, and *Lynchburg Virginian*. However, Lewis was permitted to remain in residence until either the debt was paid or the land was sold. A debt of \$4,526.25 incurred by both Lewis and Woodville is not clear, but in all probability it was connected with the mysterious debt of John B. Lewis.

At any rate, Oliver Beirne became a purchaser of the Sweet Springs tract when it was put on sale by Commissioners John Echols and Samuel Price on August 18, 1852. He executed his four bonds with Allen T. Caperton as his security. Each bond was for \$13,637.50 payable in one, two, three, and four years. On October 14, 1852, at circuit court a decree was entered:

... The commissioners Price and Echols aforesaid having made their report of the sale of the lands aforesaid to which there was no exception, the same was confirmed, and it appearing that Oliver Beirne became the purchaser of the Sweet Springs and adjoining lands, and has executed bonds with security for the purchase money which are filed with said report. . . .

The court ordered that George W. Hutchinson make a deed of conveyance for Oliver Beirne "for said lands at his cost."²⁴ A

¹⁹Ibid., pp. 255-256.

²⁰Ibid., pp. 218-220. John B. Lewis gave up all the land and buildings at Sweet Springs, together with his personal property such as all his hogs, horses, cattle, sheep, plantation utensils, wagons, carts, and numerous other personal items.

²¹Ibid., pp. 221-222.

²²Ibid., p. 223.

²³Ibid., p. 248.

²⁴Ibid., Vol. T, p. 80.

few weeks later Beirne sold half of the property to Allen T. Caperton and Christopher J. Beirne, giving them each one-fourth of it.²⁵ These three men constituted the Sweet Springs Company. Then on October 12, 1858, Allen T. Caperton sold to Oliver Beirne the land at the headwaters of Dunlap's Creek known as the Sweet Springs tract and containing several tracts, one of them 184 acres on which the hotel buildings stood and another 219 acres and also 245 acres, both of which joined the first. Oliver Beirne, Allen T. Caperton, and Christopher J. Beirne bought this in 1857. Caperton also sold his interest in a sawmill, apparently on one of the previously mentioned tracts of land.²⁶ A few days earlier Christopher Beirne sold to Oliver Beirne his interest in the same lands for \$45,000.²⁷ Christopher Beirne also sold his rights and interest in 480 acres on Dunlap's Creek very near the Sweet Springs tract which had been purchased that same month by the partners from A. A. Chapman, commissioner.²⁸ And thus the Sweet Springs property remained until after the Civil War.

Sweet Springs was always crowded in the early days. Sometimes visitors arriving as late as July had the difficult problem of finding sleeping room for themselves. Some slept on the barroom tables and on the benches of the old courthouse, at that time the church for the Springs. Or, if one had influential friends, one might be able to squeeze one more cot (this is absolutely the very last one!) into one of the log cabins. There would probably already be five or six cots in the same cabin.

However, nearly everyone admitted the accommodations at the Sweet Springs were nearly always good, the fare excellent. Of course, the dining room had not been built with the idea of so many guests as were there in 1834. One could always set up additional large tables in the barroom. What an alluring prospect this must have held for some of the guests.

By 1834 Sweet Springs was considered by some to be as beautiful as White Sulphur Springs, but one visitor said of it:

... Nature has perhaps done as much here as at any watering place among the mountains; but I do not think the improvements or the arrangements of the buildings at all equal to

²⁵*Ibid.*, pp. 79-82.

²⁶*Ibid.*, pp. 312-313.

²⁷*Ibid.*, p. 308.

²⁸*Ibid.*, p. 310.

those at the White Sulphur Springs. The extensive undulating lawn, the grove of noble oaks—the cottages on the open green, or peering from amidst the trees do indeed, present a beautiful scene. But the latter are scattered in rows or groups over the ground without any regular order, and the lawn has never undergone any of the operations of art. The springs rise under the piazza of a low and long house, at the foot of the hillock on which the tavern stands, and in a hollow formed by this, with the small hill on which the cabins are principally built. The reservoir is a circle of about five feet diameter, surrounded by a railing two or three foot high. Great quantities of carbonic acid gas are constantly emitted, which come bubbling up through the water, giving it somewhat the appearance of boiling.²⁹

He might have been a little kinder to the buildings had he known what was to come. The same year Peregrine Prolix described his surroundings with a great deal of enthusiasm:

Four hours were taken to reach the Sweet by coach, one of the most ancient and celebrated places in the United States. The aspect of the place is lovely, the harsh and rough features which belong to more recent clearings have been mellowed and moulded into symmetry by the gentle touch of time, that great innovator; and in Virginia mountains, almost the sole improver, because nobody else has capital enough, and time is a capital fellow for time is money.

You drive into a spacious green undulating area, shaded here and there with trees, and surrounded by motley groups of frame buildings of all shapes and ages, and you see in front of you, raising behind a row of modern cabins, a remarkably beautiful rounded hill, whose tree-clad top seems to lead by a gentle acclivity to the mountain range which bounds the view.

In a little valley on your left is a frame building containing two large and separate baths for the two sexes, and under its piazza is a famous spring, sweet in name but slightly acidulous in taste, sparkling and spirit, stirring like champagne [sic], and ever copiously flowing like the stream of time. This sends forth a power of water, and it fills two large plunging baths, which are very agreeable from the sparkling transparency and high temperature of the elements.³⁰

Both of these gentlemen would have been surprised if they had seen the buildings at Sweet Springs four years later. The

²⁹"Visit to the Virginia Springs During the Summer of 1834," *Southern Literary Messenger*, 1835, p. 613.

³⁰Peregrine Prolix (pseudonym) *Letters Descriptive of the Virginia Springs, the Roads Leading Thereto, and the Doings Thereat*, p. 59.

"inestimable Dr. Lewis"³¹ had been later in beginning an expansion program for his resort than had the other spas, but it was generally agreed by even the most fastidious that he had outdone them all. In place of the crude frame cabins, had arisen a brick hotel of proportions such as were not to be seen anywhere else in the mountains, not even at White Sulphur! The whole width of the two-story brick building was 250 feet and it was an astounding forty-eight feet deep.³² The second floor consisted of thirty-six bedrooms, each about fourteen feet square. The dining room on the first floor was 160 feet long—one end of which was a ladies' drawing room and at the other end a room reserved for dancing, each forty by forty-eight feet. If the inside was astonishing, the outside was awe-inspiring.

The piazza, seventeen feet wide, ran the whole length of the building and stood on brick arches reached by three sets of black walnut steps. These steps were the width of each of three porticos, by which the front of the building was ornamented. The basement was used for a kitchen, bar, bake and store rooms, and offices.³³ There were also two reception rooms in the basement, one for ladies and one for gentlemen.³⁴ Dr. Lewis, or some of the former owners of the Springs, must have had this hotel in mind or plans drawn for it for several years because it is rumored to have been designed by Thomas Jefferson.³⁵ In fact, the whole thing was so magnificent that at least one person wondered how it would be paid for. "Poor fellow, I'm afraid his means will fail," said Miss Elizabeth Van Lew in a letter.³⁶ His "means" must have failed, for in a few years John B. Lewis was forced to sell Sweet Springs for one reason or another. No

³¹The person of Dr. Lewis is somewhat of a mystery. Some writers refer to him as Dr. Benjamin Lewis, but the only Benjamin Lewis this writer has been able to locate was dead by 1838. John B. Lewis, grandson of William Lewis, seemed to be running the resort at this period. Perhaps the B. is for Benjamin.

³²T. H. Perkins, *Springs of Virginia*, reprinted in *Biennial Report of the Department of Archives and History of West Virginia*, 1940-1942, pp. 34-42.

³³*Ibid.*, p. 41.

³⁴William Burke, *The Virginia Mineral Springs*, p. 179.

³⁵In many respects, the Sweet Springs hotel building resembles the buildings at the University of Virginia designed by Jefferson. For example, the columns, porticos, and several other architectural technicalities are the same in both. The building resembles in the finest detail an unidentified sketch by Jefferson in the archives of the Alderman Library, Charlottesville, Virginia. Members of the Lewis family report that the original plans for the building as drawn by Jefferson were in the possession of the Lewis family until about 1900. Their location at present is not known. These plans were definitely labeled as having been drawn by Jefferson while the sketch in the Alderman Library is not identified, but is said by Jeffersonian experts to be lettered in his hand.

³⁶Elizabeth Van Lew, letter to Charles I. Richards, dated August 2, 1838.

wonder, for the entire structure cost \$60,000 and as late as 1850 the guests were still eating in an unplastered dining room.³⁷

In the years immediately following the purchase of Sweet Springs by Oliver Beirne and his friends, the Springs enjoyed a greater reputation of grandeur and expansion than at any other time. On July 14, 1855, Beirne acquired an immense tract of land, near Gap Mills, known as the Lewis Place from his brother Andrew in acknowledgement of a debt Andrew owed. Apparently Andrew was never able to pay because the property stayed in the Oliver Beirne family for many years.³⁸ Vast herds of horses from the Springs were wintered on the Lewis Place and returned to the Springs in the summer for use of guests during the busy season.

During the Civil War the resort did not appear to operate, nor was Sweet Springs the scene of any important battles or raids. General Averell did go through Sweet Springs on his way to the Salem Raid, and he had intended to return the same way, but due to enemy action he returned by way of Covington instead.³⁹ Also, following the Lynchburg Raid the Federal troops returned to Charleston, West Virginia, by way of New-castle, Sweet Springs, White Sulphur Springs, and Meadow Bluff.⁴⁰ Both expeditions caused the usual military depredations on the valley of Sweet Springs, but miraculously the resort buildings themselves were not damaged. Lewis family traditions say that General Hunter gave orders for Lynnside, the Lewis home, and Sweet Springs to be destroyed, but Mrs. Lewis was able to persuade General Averell to place a guard at both places.⁴¹

II

Post-Civil War Ownership

Although the resort reopened shortly after the Civil War, patronage of the Springs was greatly reduced in some of the years following it. For instance, on July 27, 1885, there were

³⁷Perceval Reniers, *The Springs of Virginia*, p. 151.

³⁸Monroe County Deed Book, Vol. S. pp. 210-212. This may have been his uncle, Andrew. Only 1,016 acres of it were actually called the Lewis Place, but there were 1,400 acres near-by and various other tracts in the vicinity.

³⁹Frank B. Reader, *History of the Fifth West Virginia Cavalry, Formerly the Second Virginia Infantry, and of Battery G. First West Virginia Light Artillery*, pp. 222-223.

⁴⁰J. J. Sutton, *History of the Second Regiment, West Virginia Cavalry Volunteers, During the War of the Rebellion*, p. 135.

⁴¹Logan, op. cit., p. 29.

only seventeen guests at the Sweet. Beirne may have been discouraged with his resort because on that date he offered it to the State of West Virginia for the proposed second hospital for the insane, which the legislature was expected to authorize. The complete property was offered to the State for \$250,000, about half of its original cost.⁴² For some reason, perhaps through lack of funds, the State failed to authorize the proposed hospital.

At the time of his death in 1888, Oliver Beirne was recognized as one of the richest men in West Virginia. Besides his vast holdings in West Virginia, which amounted to about 8,031 acres,⁴³ he held land in Virginia and Louisiana. He probably paid more in taxes than all the rest of the community put together. The land book of 1886 shows that the Sweet Springs land was worth \$75,000 and the total for the buildings and land was \$83,568. This is the evaluation of the property for tax purposes and not the sale value of it. However, by 1892 the total evaluation of the land and the buildings decreased to only \$75,200. Apparently the heirs to whom the property passed after Beirne's death could not or did not desire to keep up the resort. It was kept open to the public during those years with the help of managers.

The heirs to Beirne's property were his daughter, Nannie Van Ahlefeldt, and his grandchildren, the children of William Porcher Miles. Thus, all the property except Walnut Grove, the Beirne home at Union, Monroe County, passed into the hands of the grandchildren. Mrs. Von Ahlefeldt got Walnut Grove. Executors of the will were Hugh Caperton, W. G. Caperton, and William Porcher Miles, Beirne's son-in-law.⁴⁴

On January 14, 1895, the executors turned over the entire estate to the heirs, the grandchildren. From that time forth the property was gradually sold, including the Lewis Place which was sold in 1922 to John and Grover G. Mitchell, Charles E. Lynch, Lon Talbott, C. Thomas Sibold, and Sam A. Lynch.⁴⁵

On December 15, 1903, the property at Sweet Springs was sold to the Old Sweet Springs Company headed by Charles C. Lewis, Jr. This included all personal property at the hotel and

⁴²*Border Watchman*, July 27, 1885.

⁴³*Monroe County Land Book*, 1928. Sweet Springs constituted 408 acres of this.

⁴⁴*Monroe County Will Book*, Vol. 12, p. 434.

⁴⁵*Monroe County Deed Book*, Vol. 57, pp. 154-156.

the farming implements. With it went some land in Alleghany and Craig Counties, Virginia, including the stable at Alleghany Station. The whole purchase included some 1,218¼ acres of land and was to cost the company \$35,000 plus interest.⁴⁶ If the payments were not completed by December, 1913, the heirs could sell the property by law.⁴⁷

The records show that Lewis was notified in July 1909, that he had not paid his corporation taxes for the year, and in August he was notified for a license for his golf club, both by the State of West Virginia. The club license was \$15.00 and the taxes were \$55.00 including a \$5.00 penalty for not paying on time.⁴⁸

Charles C. Lewis, Jr., apparently said little or nothing to his father concerning his business dealings with Sweet Springs, for the elder Lewis was constantly writing letters that he knew nothing of certain debts about the resort but that payment would be forthcoming. Oddly enough, the debts were never specific.

The deed of 1903 had stated that if the corporation containing Charles C. Lewis, Jr., and others did not pay for the resort by 1913, the Beirne heirs would get the property back. Apparently the corporation did not meet their financial obligations and the Beirne heirs repossessed it. On December 11, 1916, Charles C. Lewis, Sr., brought suit against the Old Sweet Springs Company with William P. Miles, Jr., and others, the Beirne heirs, with W. M. LaFon (lawyer from Union, West Virginia) as special commissioner.⁴⁹ On February 6, 1917, John D. Lewis bid in the resort for his father for \$60,000 on which C. C. Lewis, Sr., made the final purchase April 20, 1917, when Lewis, Jr., went to Union and turned over the check to LaFon. Then Lewis, Jr., became president of the corporation.

The following year C. C. Lewis, Sr., died, and his wife, Bettie, and the Kanawha Banking and Trust Company of Charleston sold the resort to their son, John D. Lewis. The sale included the 1,218¼ acres, including land in Craig and Alleghany Counties, Virginia. She also sold 570 acres on Cover Creek. She also sold a stable situated in Alleghany Station on

⁴⁶Ibid., Vol. 38, p. 87.

⁴⁷Monroe County Trust Deed, Vol. 5, p. 61.

⁴⁸Letter from Lewis Collection.

⁴⁹Monroe County Deed Book, Vol. 50, p. 463.

the Chesapeake and Ohio Railway in Alleghany County, together with all of the rights previously held by the Old Sweet Springs Company in the lot on which the stable was located. All personal property of the resort was sold with it.⁵⁰

From that year forth the resort changed hands even more rapidly than previously. In 1920, John D. Lewis sold 610 acres to C. H. Paxton for \$69,727.60 in cash. Paxton got all personal property, real estate, and improvements on the property. Lewis reserved the right to cut and remove timber from the sold land to build stables and other buildings such as may have been needed by him for his tenant houses and other outbuildings. Apparently there were no buildings on the land which he kept. Lewis also reserved the right to move certain buildings which were located on the sold property.⁵¹

After that sale the status of the resort became more and more vague. It was still operating for the season of 1924, for the *Monroe Watchman* reported:

Old Sweet Springs, owned and operated by Chas. H. Paxton, an experienced hotel man, will open the middle of this month for the 1924 season. Mr. Paxton has had a force of men employed for some weeks getting the building and grounds in order for the hundreds of expected guests. . . . Mr. Paxton is looking forward to a large number of guests during the summer months and it goes without saying that they will be well provided for by the management.⁵²

In December of the same year it was sold again, this time by Mrs. C. H. Paxton, apparently a widow, to W. E. E. Koepler, R. B. Parrish, C. O. Stahlman, and O. J. Wilson of Bluefield, and C. C. Morfit of Welch. A cash payment of \$2,500 was made at the time of the sale with a second payment of \$17,500 to be made February 1, 1925. If the payment was not made, the buyers lost their right and forfeited the cash payment. A third payment of \$20,000 was to be made April 1, 1925, with smaller payments to be made over a period of years until the resort was paid for. There is no mention made of the actual selling price of it. The buyers planned to sell \$100,000 of stock to be sold at \$115 per share and use the money to improve the property. As usual, the owners planned a glorious future for it.⁵³

⁵⁰Ibid., Vol. 22, pp. 269-272.

⁵¹Ibid., Vol. 24, p. 12.

⁵²*Monroe Watchman*, June 13, 1924.

⁵³Ibid., December 4, 1924.

Then the position of Sweet Springs for the next few years became even more vague. About 1920, it was sold to Senator N. B. Dial and others who never operated it. In fact, the resort closed as a hotel in either 1926 or 1928. Little can be said about it until August, 1938, when it was sold by Dial to D. M. Taylor of Roanoke for \$30,000. The sale was forced by the Finance Company of Roanoke, Inc., because of debts owed them by Dial and Company.⁵⁴

On August 18, 1941, the *Beckley Post-Herald* carried the following headline: "*Old Sweet Springs Will Be State T. B. Sanitarium.*" The State of West Virginia had bought the resort from Taylor for \$150,000. A sum of \$40,000 was paid in cash, and the remainder was paid by the following October.⁵⁵ The *Post-Herald's* story gave the best description of the resort and the reasons for the State's purchasing it:

Negotiations in Charleston have been completed whereby the State of West Virginia takes over the historic Old Sweet Springs for a tuberculosis institution, relieving the overcrowded conditions in various state institutions.

The Old Sweet, with an altitude of 2,125 feet and an available acreage of 610 acres of valley land, and a housing capacity for 500 patients offers an ideal location for a tuberculosis hospital. The fact that immediate occupancy for a limited number of patients is possible is also in favor of Old Sweet, as is the fact that it has an abundant water supply from an artesian stream.

The present owner and manager, D. M. Taylor of Roanoke, Virginia, has for some years been reclaiming the old resort, and making livable a large portion of the buildings. At present the ballroom building has about 75 modern sleeping rooms, each beautifully furnished and equipped with bath, eight cottages have already been completely renovated and are serving guests; and the swimming pool stands ready for service with a 60 foot square pool of constantly flowing crystal water.

The visit of Governor Neely and members of the State Board of Control on last Saturday was very timely. The Old Sweet, stood at its best, and opened for the first time since 1928, was alive with a host of week-end patrons, a fact that attested to its popularity. Those in the governor's party were W. S. Wysong, W. C. Cook, State Road Commissioner Ernest L. Bailey, Dr. Carl M. Frasure of West Virginia University; Dr.

⁵⁴Monroe County Deed Book, Vol. 70, pp. 146-148.
⁵⁵Ibid., Vol. 71, p. 261.

G. C. Robertson, Dr. C. F. McClintic, State Health Commissioner; Hon. Lon H. Talbott of Union and Senator H. S. Ellison of Union.

On August 21, 1941, the *Monroe Watchman* speculated on the benefits the proposed sanitarium would bring to Monroe County:

The people of this senatorial district, and of Monroe County in particular, should indeed be grateful to Senator H. S. Ellison for his devoted efforts to bring one of the state's major institutions here—efforts that culminated successfully with the purchase by the state last week of the Old Sweet Springs property. . . .

In this effort, which resulted so successfully, Senator Ellison was ably assisted by another state official, Honorable L. H. Talbott of the Road Commission.

It is too early to predict what changes the creation of a large tubercular sanatorium at Sweet Springs will bring to life in Monroe County. Undoubtedly it is one of the biggest developments here in the county's history.

The housing of some 500 to 700 patients at Sweet Springs, together with the staff necessary to care for them, will doubtlessly mean the growth of a fair size town in that community in the course of a few years. Property values will rise, there will be an enlarged market for farm produce of many varieties, and numerous employment opportunities, both on new construction and in the permanent operation of the sanitarium, will be created.

The agreement between the state and the resort's owner, D. M. Taylor, provides for an outright purchase of \$155,000, the proposed provision for a year's lease having been eliminated. Mr. Taylor expects to give possession soon after September 1st, the leases on some of the cottages expiring on that date. All personal property at Old Sweet Springs passes to the state except the furnishings which Mr. Taylor has brought here for use in his own cottage, and the cattle being grazed on the farm.

The facilities are being surveyed this week by the State Board of Control engineers preparatory to drawing up plans for alterations, for renovation of some sections not ready for immediate occupancy, and for the construction of a boiler house from which steam will be piped to the various buildings for heating purposes. Final purchase by the state is now subject only to examination of the title and other legal details.³⁶

³⁶*Monroe Watchman*, August 21, 1941. See also Monroe County Deed Book, Vol. 79, p. 261. The recorded deed gives a complete description of the property included in the sale.

It may be noted that there is a discrepancy of \$5,000 between the amount of money quoted in the *Deed Book* as being paid for the resort and what the *Monroe Watchman* reports. It could be a typographical error.

Unfortunately for the community, the operation of the Springs as a sanitarium was not successful. There seems to be no official reason for this, but one might guess that the valley in which the spring is located is much too damp for tubercular patients, or perhaps the reason was a lack of funds from which to run the two institutions for the same purpose. At any rate, the state legislature ordered the institution closed in 1943.

It was opened again in 1945 as a guest home for the old people of the State of West Virginia. It is being used today in this capacity. It is called the Andrew Rowan Memorial Home after the man who carried the message to Garcia during the Spanish-American War. It was opened to its first guest in July, 1945. In 1947 an appropriation by the legislature enabled some improvements to be made on the grounds and buildings, but the biggest aid came in 1949 when the Jefferson Building was renovated.

By the summer of 1952 there were about 400 guests there. Of these, approximately half had aid from the Department of Public Assistance, thirty percent were mildly senile, and eighteen percent came from the Welch or Fairmont Emergency Hospitals.⁵⁷ About two percent paid their way. As can be seen, most of the guests came to Sweet Springs through the Department of Public Assistance and were completely provided for by the State.

III

Description of Old Sweet

As stated previously, in the beginning the resort was nothing but a collection of log cabins. Even the old courthouse was used to house the guests. The grand hotel (the Jefferson Building) was built in 1839, but the real expansion did not begin until Oliver Beirne became the owner of the resort.

His original idea, thwarted by the Civil War, was to make a semi-circle of buildings in the area, with the bath house some-

⁵⁷Sixteenth Report of the West Virginia Board of Control, 1948-1951.



Dr. B. L. Traynham of Sweet Springs marks the spot where Anne Royall's home was located at Sweet Springs. It is on the land now part of the State Old People's Home. (1952).

where near the center of it. He built five brick cottages in a semi-circle eastward from the Jefferson Building toward the Central Building which he also built and which was actually the last structure to be erected. He had planned to build another row of five cottages on the other side of the Central Building with a second great hotel completing the semi-circle. Thus, the Central Building would have really been the central structure of the semi-circle. Directly behind this building stood a brick building originally used as slave quarters but later as bachelors' quarters.⁵⁸ Beyer's painting of Sweet Springs as published in 1857 gave a preview of Beirne's plan. The Beyer picture of the Old Sweet showed the semi-circle completed. It could well be that the owner convinced Beyer that the plan was so far advanced that it would be best to show Sweet Springs as it would be in a few years.⁵⁹ The brick bath house, built some time during this same period, is a rather formal looking building about two hundred yards from the main hotel, of quadrangular shape, with two high towers. Graceful curved stairways led to upper rooms in these towers where the bath man and bath maid slept. Looking from the porch of the hotel, the ladies' entrance was on the right and was made more exclusive by a boxwood hedge, and the gentlemen's was on the left. A high brick wall divided the pool into two sections.⁶⁰

As late as 1890 guests were thrilled by the beauty and grandeur of the great hotel. Visitors, alighting from the stage, entered the west end of the hotel into a room covered with velvet carpeting and set with carved sofa and chairs. Draped damask hung from brass cornice. Up a few steps was a narrow corridor extending the entire length of the ground floor along which were shoe-shine parlors, barber shops, flunkies' quarters, and the like. The bar, which adjoined a large game room, was brick paved, with arched brick columns, and two huge brick fireplaces in which cord-length logs glowed constantly. Here also were two very handsome billiard tables, comfortable settees, and chairs for men only.⁶¹

⁵⁸Mrs. William Peters (formerly Mrs. C. C. Lewis, Jr.). Personal interview. August 24, 1952.

⁵⁹Edward Beyer, *Album of Virginia* (unnumbered).

⁶⁰Letter by Mrs. B. L. Traynham in Works Progress Administration Collection.

⁶¹*Ibid.*

A winding stairway (since removed) just outside the ladies' reception room in the corridor led to the next floor. The parlor, dining room, and lobby, occupying the entire upper floor, opened through deep hand-carved doorways onto the pillared porticos.⁶²

Supper in the spacious dining room seating 1,000 was a stately affair. With great dignity the head waiter escorted one to his place. Crystal chandeliers and soft candlelight added charm to the diners. The balls, held in the grand ballroom, were supposed to be among the finest anywhere in the South. At least one visitor regarded the ballroom itself as one of the three largest and most beautiful in the Old South.⁶³

Music for the balls was furnished by a string band which sat on a raised dais at the upper end of the ballroom. Directly in front of this sat the chaperone "whose approval or frown decided your social status."⁶⁴ Long mirrors reflected the dancers. The crystal chandeliers were made for candles, but were later wired for electricity.⁶⁵

Across the hall that led to the ballroom was a lovely reception room, in the center of which stood a mahogany table. On this table was a generous-sized punch bowl from which the guests regaled themselves at intervals during the dance. Abutting this room was a wide veranda, sheltered only by swaying branches of age-old trees.⁶⁶

The bedrooms were furnished with old English chintz curtains, and the spool beds were sheeted with linen; dressers matched the beds, and the rooms were lighted by candles in brass candlesticks or small glass lamps.⁶⁷ Each room also had a chest of drawers and a rocking-chair.⁶⁸

The resort was operating again in 1867, but little is known of it until June 9, 1876, when the *Border Watchman*, the Monroe County newspaper, ran the following article clipped from the *Richmond Whig*:

⁶²*Ibid.*

⁶³*Ibid.*

⁶⁴*Ibid.*

⁶⁵*Ibid.*

⁶⁶*Ibid.*

⁶⁷*Ibid.*

⁶⁸Mrs. William Peters. Interview.

"The Old Sweet"—Among the many resorts in the mountains there is not a more pleasant or picturesque one than the famous "Old Sweet Springs." It is here that the *elite* withdraw from the bustle and jar and surfeit of the metropolitan "White," while for the pure enjoyment of that quiet and repose which are so necessary in the recreation of tired or exhausted nature. The grounds, and waters, and baths at the Old Sweet are all famous, while the *menus* is [sic] celebrated for its excellence throughout the land. The scenery too is the most sublime in the entire range of the Blue Ridge. It is easy of access, being only ten miles of staging from Alleghany Station, on the Chesapeake and Ohio road, and the very best people are always sure to be met with at this resort. Thus speaks the *Richmond Whig*, and we think it is about right.

Two years later, on July 7, the *Border Watchman* had this to say:

This justly celebrated summer resort was opened the 15th ult., under the supervision of the prince of caterers, Capt. Jno. H. Freeman. "The Sweet," in point of comfort and neatness in its appointments and arrangements, is equaled by few, and unsurpassed by none, of the various watering places. We are informed that there are now about fifty guests at "The Sweet."

Thus, the flow of guests might be somewhat reduced by the late war, but the glory of "The Old Sweet" continued to attract those who could afford the luxury of the place. Indeed, Sweet Springs must have been the most comfortable of the resorts, if we are to believe one writer who said that Sweet Springs was the only spring measuring up to comfort by Northern standards.⁶⁹

Near the close of the season of 1877, one writer waxed somewhat poetic when he wrote:

Mr. Editor: . . . I cannot but wonder what ecstatic delight his (Sam'l Johnson) great soul would have felt during such a ride as I last week enjoyed from Second Creek to the Sweet Springs and back. . . . Dinner over, we paid a visit to the Springs. Mr. Beirne did not seem in the least excited over our distinguished presence. Nevertheless, we rolled on his ten-pin alley, . . . admired his beautiful place, and felt thankful for a man who can devise and carry on a business that affords pleasure, employment, and profit to so many. Some forty summer swallows were still flitting about the grounds.⁷⁰

⁶⁹The Nation, September, 1877. "A Weekly Journal."

⁷⁰Border Watchman, September 28, 1877. Letter to the Editor. (Writer not identified.)

By the 1880's most of the guests from the South came as far as Alleghany Station by train and were met there by the stage from the hotel. Good stage horses were required for the service and in 1881 Oliver Beirne placed the following advertisement in the *Border Watchman*:

Notice—I wish to purchase 12 good stage horses, 15½ to 16 hands, of good action, kind to harness, from six to seven years old, for which I will pay a fair price in Cash, at the Sweet Springs, Monroe County, W. Va.

There was no signature; one simply knew it was Oliver Beirne.

The year following the purchase of Sweet Springs by the Lewises, an electric light system was installed in June by John L. Livers of Woodstock Virginia. Ed Zimmerman of Lewisburg was to be in charge of the plant. The system included not only the hotel but also the grounds and other buildings.⁷¹ Later that summer, a new steam laundry, complete with all attachments, was installed for the convenience of the guests.⁷² The first long distance telephone from Alleghany Station to Sweet Springs was built at the same time. Undoubtedly, both the addition of electricity and a new laundry was meant to be an added inducement to guests, both to encourage more guests to visit the resort and an attempt to keep those who came. It was already hinted that the spas were not as popular as they once had been. The reason for the somewhat sudden decline of the resorts has been discussed to and fro by the experts for the last half century. Some blame it on the automobile, some on the Civil War, and some on improved sanitary conditions in the cities during the malaria season. All of these conditions probably had much to do with the decline of the spas. I do not believe that any one particular condition contributed completely to the demise of the resorts. Times have changed. Things move faster, more people go more places, but few stay very long at any one spot. The movies, and more recently, television, have provided entertainment at home. Home is more comfortable even in the hot and humid summer.

By the summer of 1906 West Virginians were dominating the hotel at Sweet Springs:

⁷¹*Monroe Watchman*, June 16, 1904.
⁷²*Ibid.*, August 11, 1904.

The Old Sweet Springs closed a most successful season. Up to the middle of August the Richmond colony was the most numerous, but at that time the influx of West Virginians was so great that Charlestonians carried off the palm, for numbers and also proved the most lavish entertainers.⁷³

Actually this notation is a little misleading. West Virginians and near-by Virginians had dominated the scene since the Civil War. The few remaining hotel registers of that period point up this fact.

The following summer the Sweet Springs Golf Club was formed. It was a small course—about nine holes—but those who can remember say it was a good one. The stockholders were C. C. Lewis, Jr., W. D. Payne, J. F. Bouchelle, Berkeley Minor, Jr., and C. A. Sullivan, all of Charleston. The capital stock was \$1,000 and the corporation was to expire fifty years after the issuance of the certificate of corporation. The stock was divided into 500 shares with a par value of two dollars each. The club had a cafe and sold supplies to its members.⁷⁴

The desperate effort to attract patrons continued well into the season of 1909. On July 13 of that year, C. C. Lewis, Sr., general manager of the resort, wrote to one F. Zerbán Brown of Philadelphia—possibly an insurance man:

There are 1825 acres in the whole tract, something like half of it under cultivation.

The Grand Hotel is brick 263 feet long and 67 feet wide, dining room in same is 157 by 39 feet in the clear, ladies parlor and sitting room each 49 by 39 feet. Two ordinaries 55 by 12 feet, besides kitchen, bakery, closets etc. on the first floor, with forty six rooms for guests and six water closets and toilet rooms each. In the basement there are numerous rooms for Pool, Billiards, Bar etc. Adjoining and connected is a large Ball Room with twenty six rooms for guests.

The Central Building, brick contains seventy two rooms, three floors, with toilet and hot and cold baths on each floor for gentlemen and ladies. There are also five brick cottages containing eight to fourteen rooms each, total fifty six besides a number of frame cottages giving a total capacity of about 800 guests. Also one large three story brick and frame building of about the same size for servants with toilets, built last year.

⁷³Ibid., September, 1906 (condensed in "30 Years Ago" column, September 3, 1936).

⁷⁴Monroe Deed Book, Vol. 40, p. 618, July 10, 1907.

About \$8000.00 was invested last year in beds, bedding, silver and queensware, kitchen ware, etc. besides a new Gas Machine costing over \$1000.00, making a total of over \$5000.00 expended in the place last year; all of which including livery and everything to be included in the One Hundred and Seventy Five Thousand Dollars. . . .⁷⁵

There seems to be no clear reason for this letter. Probably Lewis hoped to borrow money from Brown for improvements, or he might have been hoping to sell it to him. He might also have been interested in obtaining insurance on the resort. This letter seems to be the last description of the resort for many years. Because of the constant change of ownership and the rapid decline and final closing of the spa about 1928, D. M. Taylor found a staggering amount of repairs to be done when he purchased it in 1938.

After extensive repairs to the resort, approximating \$97,000, Taylor opened a tea room about 1940 or 1941. Facilities at that time included swimming, croquet, badminton, and a rough golf course. The alterations included replacing the old wooden porch of the Jefferson Building with concrete, a bath with each room, changing the pool from wood to concrete but leaving the floor gravel as that is where the water rises, and elaborate redecoration of the ballroom to be used for special occasions. In the spring of 1942 the building and furnishings were valued by an insurance company at \$67,000.⁷⁶

The *Monroe Watchman* on July 3, 1941, announced the opening of the resort in the following manner:

For the first time since 1928 the famous Old Sweet Springs is now open for the entertainment of overnight guests. For several years past the grill has been open each summer in the basement for serving meals, but sleeping quarters have not been available for visitors.

Fred Taylor, a son of D. M. Taylor, owner of the famous old resort, was serving as manager. In a brief announcement he stated:

The Old Sweet Springs will be open for a limited number of guests from July 3 until Labor Day. The swimming pool, a croquet, badminton and rough golf course are included privileges.

⁷⁵Letter from the Lewis Collection, West Virginia University Library.
⁷⁶Personal interview with Thomas Taylor, son of D. M. Taylor, at Roanoke, Virginia, July 1, 1962.

Sleeping quarters beautifully furnished with antique furniture, are available in the old ballroom building, which has been divided into guest rooms, and in four cottages. Meals will be served in the grillroom, of which Mrs. Annie Rumbold Thompson, a matron of Augusta Military Academy, is manager.

None of the remainder of the main building is open, however, except the reception room, which has been entirely redecorated. The floor of the great dining room has been smoothed and polished, and Mr. Taylor plans to use it for special occasions.⁷⁷

However, the opening of the resort for a social season must have been a failure or at least not a resounding success, for on August 18, 1941, the *Beckley Post-Herald* noted that the Old Sweet was to be sold.

IV

Social Life At Sweet Springs

In the early days, people visited the Sweet Springs for the purpose of drinking the waters. However, it soon became apparent that there was more to visiting the springs than drinking the health-giving waters. For once one was there, what was to stop one from gambling, drinking liquors, cavorting about with one or more of the beautiful, if unhealthy damsels there, and generally making merry?

The ample and tasty fare at the Sweet Springs, like the other spas, was one of the main recommendations of the place. Laurence Butler, in 1791, commented that he did not think the accommodations were as good at the Sweet Springs as at the Hotel de York in Paris (perhaps in jest), but that there was "plenty of good eating."⁷⁸ There are no specific records as to the kind of foods served at Sweet Springs in those early days, but one can imagine that it was very much the same as that served at White Sulphur Springs and the other leading resorts.

In the early fall of 1794 there came to Sweet Springs one James McHenry, a physician and personal friend of George Washington. McHenry, also something of a geologist, took a dim view of most of the goings on at the Springs, and he left for us an excellent picture of the eating hours of the guests:

⁷⁷ Monroe Watchman, July 3, 1941.

⁷⁸ Laurence Butler, letter to a friend, April 25, 1791.

... Then comes breakfast about eight o'clock after having kept the appetite on the rack for an hour before. About eleven o'clock you review your potion of water (the first drink came at seven in the morning); make little riding or walking excursions, visit Beaver Dam, or sit on benches or chat till three o'clock when everyone is anxious to hear a loud blow which is the summons to dinner. From six to eight o'clock there is a little more water drinking after which those who chuse [sic] coffee, tea, bread and milk or rye must eat supper, and in a general way thus begins, proceeds and closes the dismal occupations of the Sweet Springs.⁷⁹

This is an interesting comparison to the eating hours of the resort in the late nineteenth century. A list published in a petty ledger for guests dated 1872 states the dining hours as follows: Breakfast, 7 to 10 A.M.; Dinner, 2 to 4 P.M.; and Tea, 7 to 9 P.M. Children and servants were served at seven, one, and six. Guests having friends to dine were to notify the office beforehand and meals or lunches served in rooms, or taken from the table, were charged extra. It was also noted that any inattention of the servants would be promptly remedied if reported to the steward.⁸⁰

The meals in the early days of the Springs probably were fairly simple. Breakfast may have consisted of meat, bread of some kind, probably hot, and a beverage. The big meal of the day consisted of several kinds of meat, such as venison, mutton, beef or pork, and whatever vegetables may have been in season at the time. It seems doubtful at this period that there was a farm solely devoted to the raising of vegetables for the guests. However, as the fame and prestige of the resort grew so did its menu. For one thing, a farm was instituted for the sole purpose of supplying the guests and the hotel employees with a plentiful supply of fresh vegetables such as only the mountains could produce in the hot summer weather. Rich pastries and an almost complete list of liquors added a final touch to the grandeur of spa living. Wines and other liquors early became a part of the daily routine of living at the resort. In fact, there were some, like the theologian, Archibald Alexander, who thought that all some of the guests did was drink intoxicating spirits! There is no remaining evidence of the adequacy of the hotel wine cellar during the early days, but at least one list remains from the later period. The hotel was open-

⁷⁹ James McHenry, letter to Mrs. McHenry, September, 1794.
⁸⁰ Petty Ledger for Guests, 1872, p. 290.

ed for the first time following the Civil War in 1868, and the list of liquors printed for the guests of that year was probably a new one, since it was not likely that there was anything left from the years before the war.⁸¹

Wine List

Champagne

	Qts.	Pts.
L. Roederer, carte blanche	\$4.50	\$2.50
Roederer imperial	5.00	—
Ruinart Pere & Fils, La Marechale	4.50	2.50
Ruinart Pere & Fils, carte blanche	4.50	2.50
Ruinart Pere & Fils, verzenay	4.00	2.50
Piper Heidsieck	4.00	2.50
G. H. Mumm's verzenay	4.50	2.50
Moet & Chandon verzenay	4.00	2.50
Moet & Chandon green seal	5.00	3.00

Bordeaux (red)

St. Estephe	1.00	
Medoc	1.50	
St. Julien, 1861	2.00	1.50
St. Emilion	3.00	
Chateau Leoville	2.00	
Chateau Larose	4.00	
Chateau Margaux	5.00	
Chateau Lafitte (white)	5.00	
Sauterne	2.00	
Haut Barsac	—	
Chateau Yquem	6.00	

Burgundy (red)

Beaune	2.00	
Pommard	3.00	
Chambertin	5.00	
Romanne	5.00	
Glos de Vougeot (white)	—	
Chablis	—	
Montrachet	5.00	

Rhine wines

Niersteiner	3.50	
Rudesheimer	3.50	
Hochheimer Berg	3.50	
Markobrunner Cabinet	5.00	
Schloss Johannisberg	6.00	
Sparkling Hock	3.50	2.00
Sparkling Mossel	3.50	2.00

⁸¹This list is found pasted to the back of a blotter for 1868 in West Virginia

Sherry, Madeira & Port

Table		
Harmony Pale	2.50	1.50
Harmony Topaz	2.50	1.50
Imperial Amontillado	3.50	2.00
Payne's Madeira	4.00	
Table Port	2.00	1.50
Victoria Port	2.50	1.50

Cordials

Old Cognac	5.00
Old Jamaica Rum	4.00
Old Bluegrass Whiskey	2.50
Kirschwasser	3.50
Curacoa	4.00
Marachino	3.00
Anisette	3.50

Malt Liquors

Muir's Scotch Ale	.50
Jeffries' Ale	.50
Yonger's Ale	.50
Bass' Ale	.50
London Porter	.50
Guinness' Porter	.50

Genuine Selters Water

The known records of Sweet Springs are few and far between for the first fifty years of its operation. I have been able to locate only one record book for that entire period and that bears the date June, 1943. It is not by any means a complete record, but it does serve to remind us of the prices of some of the following items:

Venison	2½ cents per lb.
Butter	10 cents per lb.
Eggs	6¼ cents per doz.
1 Pheasant	13 cents whole
2 Turkeys	\$1.00 whole
Honey	8 to 10 cents
8 Ducks	1.00

Prices varied. For instance, in July venison sold for 2½ cents per pound and in August for 4 cents per pound. The number of guests at the hotel might have had something to do with the price. The more guests the higher the management paid for the meat, because there was less chance of its spoiling. August was the peak month for visitors. The main course of meat was

either a wild meat such as venison, turkey, pheasant, or local domesticated meats such as chicken and ducks.⁵² Beef was also important and near the turn of the century caviar was imported. However, vague the records, the food itself must have been pretty good because at least one guest wrote that, "We found an abundance of clean and good provisions, venison, mutton, good bread and butter, and excellent milk; the pastry was also good and abundant. . . ."⁵³

Any indications of the costs of living at Sweet Springs are also vague. The amount of board and room one paid must have been set according to the amount of money or influence the guest could muster because some paid \$1.72 per day, some \$2.00 per day, and some as low as \$1.50 per day. One man even paid \$1.50 for two days' board! This price included meals and room. It is also possible that these prices varied because of the different types of rooms provided. In fact, the only set price at Sweet Springs seemed to be the bath. It remained 25 cents from the earliest records until the resort closed. The monthly bills varied, too. One woman paid \$100 per month while another paid \$150. Still a third paid only \$50 for the same thirty-day period.⁵⁴ Some of the difference may also have been because of the size of the family in question. The guest books merely list "Mr. _____ and family," seldom mentioning the number in the family. Children, of course, cost half price in nearly everything. Servants also were half price. With all this variation in board it is interesting to note that in at least one journal the statement was made that board per day would be \$3.00, per month \$75, for more months \$60 per month.⁵⁵

Laundry in the early days and as late as the turn of the century was done by hand by the hotel help. It could be priced anywhere from 50 cents to \$4.00. The cost of laundry varied, too. Sometimes it cost more to have one piece done than it did to do a whole laundry. This was probably due to the difficulty of it more than to the amount.

The resort was closed during the Civil War but reopened in 1867. On September 4, 1867, General Robert E. Lee is quoted

⁵² Sweet Springs, Cash Book, June to September, 1843, found in the hotel at Salt Sulphur Springs, Monroe County.

⁵³ G. W. Featherstonhaugh, *Excursion Through the Slave States*, Reniers Collection.

⁵⁴ Sweet Springs Journal, June 20 to October 6, 1880.

⁵⁵ Petty Ledger for Guests, 1872.

as having a washing done for 35 cents. This is probably true since he was known to have visited the Springs regularly for a few years following the war. He made his headquarters at White Sulphur and toured the near-by springs at which he was wined and dined. There is no record of his paying any board at Sweet Springs. He probably did not, since other Confederate leaders who came to the Springs did not. Lee seemed to have been fond of Beaver Dam Falls, about four miles east of Sweet Springs, which he visited regularly and of which a young lady artist sent him a sketch.⁶⁶

From time to time the hotel made inventories of most of the items used for the convenience of the guests. However, no existing list is complete. The information does give one an idea of what the hotel had. A Blotter for the year 1868 lists the number of chairs in the hotel as 1,692 and broke them down into the following kinds:

Split	965
Windsor	353
Cain [sic]	320
Cushioned	54

An account book for 1871 gives the hotel credit for the following items:

Tea spoons	28
Table spoons	18
Large and small knives	47
Forks	30
Salt Spoons	8
Sugar Spoons	1
Sugar tongs	2
Sugar bowls	2
Butter knives	4
Mustard spoons	5
Syrup pitchers	3
Cream pitchers	3
Cups and saucers	18
Plates and dishes of assorted sizes	157
China candlesticks	3
Dust pan	1
Goblets	32
Finger bowls	
Several water jars, butler stands, ice bowls, trays, etc	6

⁶⁶Letter to Lee's daughter-in-law, Mrs. William Harrison Fitzhugh Lee, March 1, 1869. Quoted in the *Mourne Watchman*, September 14, 1933.

This could not possibly have been a complete list of the hotel tableware since any resort the size of Sweet Springs is bound to have more than 18 cups and saucers or 30 forks. However, a tableware inventory of 1909 is more complete and even adds:

Napkins	200
Side towels	50
New Kitchen hand towels	35
New dish towels	25
Glass towels	24

It also offers a list of all the new silver in the resort:

Knives	16 doz.
Forks	15 doz. and 6
Table spoons	18 doz. and 8
Teaspoons	29 doz.
Ice teaspoons	7 doz.
Sugar spoons	2 doz. and 7
After dinner spoons	3 doz. and 1
Sugar tongs	2 doz.
Fruit knives	2 doz. and 9
Nut picks	2 doz. and 9
Nut crackers	2 doz. and 2
Butter knives	5

A list of old silver included 105 forks, 53 knives, 74 tablespoons, 5 teaspoons, 7 butter knives, 3 nut crackers, and 12 dozen unused new cheap silver teaspoons.⁶⁷

Likewise, an inventory of the Ladies' Bathhouse would seem to be incomplete since it lists only 13 looking glasses, 2 glass tumblers, 29 reams of water closet paper, 1 broom, and 1 bucket.⁶⁸ A survey of the Gentlemen's Bathhouse produced almost the same results with the addition of 6 combs and 5 hair-brushes. The most plausible explanation for this incompleteness would be that the guests preferred to carry their own paraphernalia.

The children either had a dining room of their own, or a portion of the large dining room was designated for them, because an inventory of the same year 1909 lists the following items found in "closet in Children's Dining Room."

Water bottles	21
Sugar bowls	49

⁶⁷Sweet Springs Register, 1920, 1909. (These books usually carry more than one date.)

⁶⁸Ibid., July-September, 1883.

Small hand trays	17
Large butler's trays	24
Crumb pans	19
Racks	24
Tables	34
Chairs	160
Finger bowls	24
Pepper	50
Oil and vinegar	17
Water glasses	15 doz.
Ice tea glasses	2 doz.
Crumb knives	12
Vases about	32
Crumb brushes	19
Salt cruets	50
Ice bowls	2
Hair brooms	2

There were 100 slips, 100 sheets, and 100 towels bought in 1907 for the hotel. At the same time they bought from Miller and Rhoads in Richmond 18 gray blankets, 2 bolts of toweling for glasses, and 3 pieces of unbleached linen.⁸⁹

The employees were paid various amounts with the cook and the bartender commanding the best salaries. The cook received \$248 for three months and three days while the bartender received \$145 for two months and twenty-seven days. The lowest was the parlor maid who received \$33 for three months and nine days. They were permitted to take their wages out in merchandise at the hotel, and many of them never received any cash at all because they spent it before they got it.⁹⁰ One of the most interesting stories told during the late 1880's and 1890's concerns a Negro caterer and bartender, John Dabney. It seems that he made the best mint juleps to be found any place in the South and had a cup given him by the Prince of Wales to prove it. This same man also was in the process of buying himself free when the Civil War broke out. When the war was over he refused to admit his freedom until he had sent a wagon load of household goods and food to his former mistress to pay for the remainder of his freedom.⁹¹ He never permitted anyone to see his cooking operations.⁹²

⁸⁹*Ibid.*, 1907.

⁹⁰*Hands Book (Employees)*, 1879.

⁹¹Personal interview, Miss Rose Caperton, July, 1932.

⁹²Personal interview, Mr. S. C. Craig, July, 1932.

During the same period it was reported that one to two beeves under three years old were killed each week and fifteen to twenty sheep per week for the plates of the guests at the resort. Cooking was done by wood on six fire ranges. The resort also put up its own ice. There were apparently five ice houses, one on top of the ground and four that were in the ground.⁹³

There was always a great deal of baking done at the resort and nearly every inventory, no matter how incomplete, listed quantities of powdered, granulated, and brown sugar. All sorts of fruits such as apples, raisins, lemons, cherries, and others were to be found there. Also extracts, coconut, flour, and all the other ingredients that go into baking. During the peak years of resort visiting before the Civil War the Old Sweet played host to as many as 3,000 guests at one time. Of course, not so many people were able to come after the war, but those who could responded to the advertisements in the papers. On August 25, 1876, Oliver Beirne paid by check the grand sum of \$151.40 for advertising in seven different newspapers. They were the *Charleston News and Courier*, *Savannah News*, *Cincinnati Gazette*, *Richmond Enquirer*, *Richmond Whig*, *Norfolk Virginian*, and the *Richmond Dispatch*.⁹⁴ There was also much advertising in the very late stages of the resort's operations. In 1923 a list gives at least ten advertising media: *The Daily News and Advance*, Lynchburg; a display advertisement in a New Orleans newspaper; *The News-Leader*, Richmond; *Daily Gazette Company*, Charleston; *Huntington Herald Company*; *Times*, Roanoke; *Globe-Democrat*, St. Louis; *Virginia and Pilot Publishing Company*; *Where to Go Bureau, Inc.*, Boston, and the *Times*, Washington. In June of that year 2,000 pamphlets of twelve pages each were bought for \$84 for distribution to the guests.⁹⁵

What did the guests do for amusement? In the beginning there was little besides eating and drinking, card playing, and a little dancing. At least one early guest complained that none of these efforts afforded him any joy.

... Why there are none [amusements] here unless card parties are considered of this class. I have heard of an as-

⁹³ Ibid.
⁹⁴ Cash Book, 1876, West Virginia University Library.
⁹⁵ Papers of C. H. Paxton, 1923, West Virginia University Library.

sembly it is true, but dancing to no music or bad music can hardly be called an amusement. One may occupy themselves however in various ways. First in drinking the water, and next in riding or walking to get good (?) of it.⁹⁶

This gentleman may have been disgruntled because his family was not with him, as he constantly reminded his wife in his letters that nothing afforded him joy if she was not with him.

However, another gentleman of a few years earlier wrote to a friend that:

. . . We had a good deal of Genteel Company from the different parts of the Continent and some from the West Indies. (Considering how far it lies in amongst the mountains) we had a regular ball every week, besides Tea parties. Our accommodations I can't say was so good as we had at Hotel de York in Paris, as there was only one Inn, and upwards of Two hundred people besides the servants to accommodate, tho' I can't say but we had plenty of good Eating, notwithstanding we had great appetites which the waters Created.⁹⁷

But even James McHenry admitted that the food was good and accommodations were not bad. He mentioned that the men dined at the common table in the dining room while the ladies took their meals in their huts or rooms. McHenry must have had a strong sense of humor because he mentioned the sermon of a preacher against dancing and card playing and then told how the men rushed out to the gaming table after church, and the ladies chose their partners. In the meantime, the only fiddler at the resort had been converted to Methodism. That had a considerable deadening effect on the assemblies at Sweet Springs.

In one of these letters to his wife, McHenry regaled her with tales of inscriptions and initials he found on the cabin walls, doors, and chairs. He did not mention any by name, but they were names of former occupants of the cabins and the dates of their arrival and departure. Some were carved "in Roman and some in Italien [sic] characters with much apparent labour and pen-knife ingenuity." He said he knew some of them but feared the whole group would be lost to posterity because the wood they carved in would decay. At that, he did not find any names of lovers.⁹⁸ Fourteen years after the above letters were written another guest wrote in almost the same words:

⁹⁶McHenry, letter to his wife, August, 1794.

⁹⁷Butler, letter.

⁹⁸McHenry, letter, August, 1794.

There were accommodations here for two hundred persons; families are provided with cabins of two, three or four rooms with furniture, individuals with loghouses, roomy or crowded, according to the increase of the company, and all that are able, meet at the public table, to a plentiful breakfast, dinner and supper, where there is little appearance of ill health or want of appetite in the majority. Wine is seldom introduced; music and dancing frequently crown the evening, and cards are resorted to, by many, more to pass time than through a spirit of gaming, although there are professed gamblers, at this place, who have set up a Pharo Bank, but must starve for want of trade, unless they meet more encouragement than the present water drinking folks seem inclined to give them. We have neither church nor clergyman within miles, but have been favoured, this day, Sunday, with a sermon by one of our party, the composition was plain, correct and well delivered, and the audience attentive and apparently edified.⁹⁹

Later from the same man: "The charge for boarding is seven dollars per week, and half a dollar per day for each horse; that is extravagantly high for the latter, as hay, oats, and corn are remarkably low." Again, "... and you may frequently purchase venison at one cent, beef and mutton at three cents, per lb. and chickens at six cents per pair; of fish the supply is small

The kind of amusements one enjoyed probably was due to what the patient had come to the Springs for—some came as invalids, some as socialites, and some as nurses for the invalids. Of this latter group one person wrote: "This is about one of the dullerest places I ever was in. The first two days we spent here I felt perfectly homesick."¹⁰¹ She was pleased to admit, however, that she was getting used to it and was glad to see that "Pa" was getting better. Then she deplored the circumstances which send poor invalids to "these comfortless spas."¹⁰² In fact, it seems that poor Miss Van Lew's only source of entertainment was the fleas which she attempted to exterminate as they could be seen "in great glee jumping about the floor in a style that seemed to set human nature in defiance."¹⁰³

One thing all the spas had in common was lack of space. Guests complained about cramped living quarters, but worse

⁹⁹John E. Caldwell, *A Tour Through Part of Virginia in the Summer of 1808*, p. 26.
¹⁰¹Ibid., p. 27.
¹⁰²Elizabeth Van Lew, letter to Charles I. Richards, August, 1839.
¹⁰³Ibid.

than that were the conditions in the dining room. Mark Pencil, a celebrated writer of his day, wrote:

We made our first appearance at dinner, where over two hundred persons were struggling for elbow room at two tables only large enough for half that number. We were so fortunate as to be seated near a celebrated caterer, who having a dozen servants in his pay, he was liberal enough to supply all his friends in his vicinity. . . . We had air during dinner, from the many fans suspended above, and which were kept constantly in motion.¹⁰⁴

Guests often complained when they had to stay at the Red Sweet (now Sweet Chalybeate) about one mile east of Sweet Springs. The resort for all its pretensions and new buildings still did not have enough room. In 1859 there were 2,752 guests divided among the three months of the season with the bulk of them coming in late July and August. The season officially opened June 15 and closed about September 20. There were always a few stragglers until the first of October.

Sweet Springs did not lose much of its popularity until the 1920's. However, the beginning of Old Sweet's decline came much earlier. The Civil War devastated the entire South and made sojourns to the spas impossible. The only people left to visit were a few local people who could count on receiving cut rates at the springs anyway and wealthy Northerners who wanted something new to do. These people kept the Springs alive for a number of years. In fact, as late as 1920 there were more than 650 guests. But the decline was sharp after 1920.

There were dances, picnics, riding and driving, and bowling. In the late period of the resort there was even a golf course in hopes of reviving the waning spirit of the spas. Of course, there was always bathing and drinking. I have already discussed this pleasure in the early period, but the heyday and the decline of the era marked much more of it than the beginning era had ever dreamed of. There are no records of the period before the Civil War, but if the period following it is any example, there was at least one big dance a week and several fancy masked balls a season. Some of these were called the "Powdered Ball" because all the men wore wigs and costumes and the women put their hair up and powdered it.¹⁰⁵

¹⁰⁴Mark Pencil, *The White Sulphur Papers*, p. 48. The real name for Mark Pencil is not known.

¹⁰⁵Miss Rose Caperton. Personal interview, July, 1952.

The band was likely to strike up at any hour, and eleven o'clock seemed as good a time as any to the resort managers. Therefore, every morning at eleven a band of eleven members played for the entertainment of guests strolling about the lawn. The same thing was repeated at two-thirty and six o'clock. The evening dances began at eight-thirty. The musicians must have well earned their pay.¹⁰⁶

The bowling alley and tennis became popular during the last part of the last century. The two bowling alleys, location uncertain, were covered with zigzag lattice work for walls and roof.¹⁰⁷

Riding and driving were popular, too. The women carried parasols while driving late in the afternoon. It was sensible not to go out in the heat of the day. It was bad for the complexion of the peaches-and-cream Virginia belles. It did the health no good either because of the strong possibility of sunstroke. Riding was good exercise if taken moderately and, of course, in a side saddle for the women. Divided skirts were long in coming into this beautiful valley. The most athletic sometimes undertook to ride to White Sulphur and back the next day.¹⁰⁸ Where did they ride and drive? Mostly to Beaver Dam Falls, a favorite picnic area about four miles from Sweet Springs. Some might venture toward Gap Mills and the Lewis Place where the horses were quartered during the winter. Mr. S. C. Craig tells of his enjoyment at seeing the horses running down the road in the spring after wintering in the stables of the Lewis Place about fourteen miles west of Sweet Springs. The prices of horses and vehicles were like all others at Sweet Springs—unstable. Saddle horses usually were \$1.50 an hour, but a carriage or cart could be from fifty cents to \$2.00 for an undetermined time.

The guest list at Sweet Springs probably included many important and well-known persons. There are no records left to indicate exactly who they were, but in all probability the same important personages who visited the other spas came to Sweet Springs. These included President Martin Van Buren, President John Tyler, Henry Clay, the Bonaparte family, and others at whom we can only guess. Following the Civil War many of the Confederate leaders, particularly the military, visited

¹⁰⁶ ¹⁰⁷ ¹⁰⁸ Coralie Lewis. Personal interview, June, 1952.

Sweet Springs. Of course, they were never charged. Among these distinguished guests were Generals Robert E. Lee, John Echols, P. G. T. Beauregard, and members of the Robert Toombs family. Andrew S. Rowan, a native of Union, made a dashing swain among the belles as he danced and capered in the dashing manner of a West Pointer. All the distinguished Monroe Countians, such as the Capertons, Beirnes, Porcher Miles, and others came to the resort as the days became better.

After the Civil War sports at the Sweet Springs became more varied. In the old days one had pretty much contented himself with riding and dancing, but the last half of the century presented a much more active picture. The old sports were continued and to them were added organized play such as track meets, including the high jump, broad jump, hurdle race, 110-yard dash, and throwing the hammer.¹⁰⁹ Right after the turn of the century a golf course was added to entice the guests. Tennis became popular.

But even the new improvements failed to keep the interest of a faster moving population, and by the end of World War I the days of the resorts were drawing rapidly to a close.

¹⁰⁹*Sweets Springs Account Book*, given by D. M. Taylor of Roanoke, Virginia, to the University of Virginia. Reference for August, 1886.